

Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
September 25, 2001

Notes (prepared by Bill Horns)

These notes summarize LMFT decisions and recommendations, and are not intended as a summary of all discussions.

Present: Mike Toney, Matt Coffaro, Lee Meyers, Paul Peeters, Pradeep Hirethota, Brad Eggold, John Kubisiak, Justine Hasz, Terry Lychwick, Tom Hansen, Bill Horns, Andy Fayram, Steve Hewett, George Boronow, Charlie Verhoeven.

Next meeting: December 5, 2001, in Sheboygan vicinity

Green Bay yellow perch.

Background (from agenda). At the July LMFT meeting we agreed to the following timetable: September 15 – assessment trawling complete. September 17 – data ready for LMFT review (including yoy and adult CPE's from assessment trawls, age/sex distributions in sport, commercial, and assessment catches. September 25 – LMFT meets for the sole purpose of developing a final recommendation on the permanent order [FH-12-01]. October 1 – green sheet completed. October 15 – Carol Turner notified about intention to request an extension of the emergency order so she can prepare a letter for the Legislature. October 24 – NRB action on permanent order. November 12 – Open water creel survey summary completed.

Action. The LMFT recommendation regarding FH-12-01 has been communicated separately to the Guidance Team (Staggs, Verhoeven, and Krohn) and to LMFT Core Group members.

Distribution of 15,000 Arlees in 2002.

Background (from agenda). Only approximately 15,000 Arlees will be produced for stocking in spring of 2002, not the planned 60,000.

Action. This is was tabled for future discussion.

Trout production for 2002-2003, yearling vs fingerling brown trout.

Background (from agenda). Our Great Lakes fish stocking expectations are running up against limitations in the statewide fish production system. We may have to give up around 34K brown trout, even if we only stock 20K brook trout. Earlier, we thought another option might be to forego stocking Fireholes, but now, because of logistical constraints in the production system, it appears that giving up Fireholes would not help brown trout production. The only question is whether we prefer to give up yearling or fingerling brown trout.

Action. The Team prefers yearlings over fingerlings. If brown trout production must be cut, the reduction should be in fingerlings.

White perch sport fishing regulations.

Background (from agenda). Presently it is not legal to retain more than one sport-caught white perch from Green Bay. The regulations pamphlet is in error on this point, so sport harvest of white perch is common and tolerated. Harvest of white perch, gobies, and ruffe is prohibited (except that one may be kept dead to verify identification) in order to minimize the risk of accidental transport of live specimens to other waters.

Action. Tom Hansen patiently explained that the problem has already been fixed. Effective April 1, 2002, there will be a continuous open season for white perch, with no daily bag limit or size limit, in Lake Michigan, Green Bay, and tributary streams to Lake Michigan and Green Bay.

Lake Michigan Committee issues.

Background. As your Lake Michigan Committee representative, I have been asked to take a position on three issues: 1) revisions to the Lake Michigan Technical Committee Terms of Reference, 2) chairmanship of the Lake Trout Task Group, and 3) stocking of humper lake trout. I have circulated e-mails to the LMFT with background information. See 8/29, 9/10, and 9/21 e-mails.

Action. The LMFT agreed 1) with proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference that would allow each of the individual Michigan tribes to have a representative on the LMTC and require biennial consideration of changing the LMTC chairmanship, 2) with the continuation of Toney and Hess as Co-chairs of the Lake Trout Task Group, and 3) with the following position on the use of humper (aka Klondike) lake trout in Lake Michigan: *The Wisconsin DNR supports further development of the Klondike strain brood stock by the Fish and Wildlife Service, but is not yet prepared to endorse stocking that strain in Lake Michigan. The introduction of Klondike strain lake trout should be considered during development of the new Lake Trout Rehabilitation Plan, and should only be attempted if recommended in the new Plan.* (Note: I will forward Pat McKee's statement regarding humpers to the LMC along with my brief position statement. I think the two are mutually consistent, but Pat's write-up provides additional elaboration of specific concerns.)

Follow-up on Steelhead recommendations made in July.

Background (from agenda). I'd like to take a few minutes to review where we are with following through on recommendations made last time. In July, the LMFT recommended the following actions: a) Extend weir operations where possible to collect as many Skamania as possible this fall. b) Attempt to collect additional

Skamania eggs by electrofishing the lower Root and Kewaunee Rivers. c) Fin-clip all stocked steelhead in the future. d) Draft a research agenda addressing disease transmission, smolt competition, adult competition, importance of size at stocking, importance of stocking location -- Steve Hogler will take the lead. e) Develop a summary of the problems and opportunities surrounding infusing new genetic diversity into our feral Skamania brood stock by importing genetic material from Indiana or from the West Coast -- John Kubisiak will take the lead. f) Develop a summary of the problems and opportunities surrounding initiating a new steelhead strain -- Steve Hogler will take the lead. We also discussed possible rule changes, including protecting migrating steelhead in the lower Root and Kewaunee Rivers and lowering the steelhead bag limit in all Wisconsin waters. The LMFT recommended taking the issue of rule changes to the LMFF and the WF/GLSFC, without a specific recommendation.

Action. The Team re-confirmed its desire to see all steelhead fin-clipped this fall.

Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum.

Background (from agenda). The LMFF has made some recommendations regarding sport fishing regulations and regarding the timetable for promulgating the revisions to 60-fathom rule. We should review and discuss the recommendations. Also, at the last LMFF meeting, the issue of allowing commercial fishers to retain incidentally-caught lake trout or to have a lake trout quota was discussed. A sub-committee was established to address the issue. The committee included Dennis Hickey, Billy Willis, Chuck Weier, Tom Hansen and/or Dave Weber, and one or two others.

Action. No actions were taken, except that the Team agreed that the issue of whether to promulgate the revisions to the 60-fathom rule as an emergency order should be referred to Mike Staggs. The Team had previously declined to recommend emergency action, but did not oppose it. I think it is fair to say that there are no biological issues at hand in that decision.

Special September 26 public yellow perch briefing in Green Bay for Senate Committee on Environmental Resources (Jim Baumgart, Dave Hansen, Dale Schultz, Robert Cowles, Robert Wirsch).

Background (from agenda). On the day following our Team meeting, there will be a public briefing for the Committee on the yellow perch situation in Green Bay. The Committee will also take a ride on the Perca the morning after the briefing. This will be an excellent opportunity to inform the Committee about what we are doing.

Action. No action, discussion item only.

Salmon passage on the Kewaunee.

Background (from agenda). Jim Baumgartner has asked us to consider a policy of harvesting all salmon that come into BAFF. See 9/14 e-mail for background.

Action. 1) Steve Hogler, Paul Peeters, and Mike Baumgartner will draft a compromise policy for this fall, in which some salmon will be passed up stream, but not as many as would otherwise be passed. The policy will be implemented without further Team discussion or review. 2) The Team agreed that this decision should be communicated to the public, and that the passage policy next year will be guided by what we hear and learn in the mean time.

Chinook salmon production shortfall.

Background (from agenda). We will be 200,000 short next spring. See 9/14 e-mail for background. Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois have been contacted for help, but we have heard nothing definite yet. A press release will go out this week.

Action. No action, discussion item only.

Possible prohibition of minnow harvest from tributary streams.

Background (from agenda). Tom Hansen has asked for a discussion of prohibiting the harvest of minnows in Lake Michigan and Green Bay tributary streams.

Action. Steve Hewett noted that the Department already have authority to prohibit minnow harvest from the tributaries because they flow into waters (Lake Michigan and Green Bay) that are infested with exotic species. Tom will look into this angle.

Green Bay west shore wetlands.

Background (from agenda). Lee Meyers has asked for a discussion of Green Bay wetlands, including a review of what has been done and what should be done.

Action. No action, discussion item only. We will take this up again at a later meeting.